

REMARKS

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-7 and 9 are now present in this application. Claim 1 is independent. Claim 1 has been amended. Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-7 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nagamatsu et al., U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0206199 (hereinafter "Nagamatsu") in view of Kodaira, U.S. Patent No. 6,427,799 (hereinafter "Kodaira"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

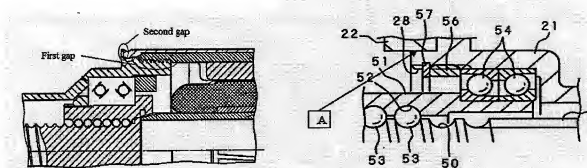
A complete discussion of the Examiner's rejection is set forth in the Office Action, and is not being repeated here.

In particular, independent claim 1 now recites a combination of elements including, *inter alia*, the recitation of "wherein the retaining part has a first portion whose diameter is smaller than a diameter of a second portion thereof which secures concentricity of the first and second housing, thereby providing a first gap, and the first gap is provided in a part that constitutes a part of the spigot-joint fitting part of said first and second housings and that is located radially outward from a fixing nut screwed into said retaining part in order to apply a tightening force on said thrust bearing from one side, and wherein said first gap substantially overlaps, in the axial direction, with a screwing region between said retaining part and said fixing nut screwed into said retaining part, and wherein said fixing nut is in direct contact with said thrust bearing, said first gap is larger than a second gap on a part of the spigot-joint fitting part where said first gap is not provided, and the first gap is provided adjacent to the second gap in the axial direction, and within said first gap, an increase in an outer diameter of the retaining part caused when the fixing nut is tightened is absorbed." Support for the amendments can be found at least in, for example, Fig. 3 and the corresponding disclosure of the Specification as originally filed. Thus, no new matter has been added. Applicants respectfully submit that the above identified features

set forth in claim 1 are not disclosed or made obvious by the references relied on by the Examiner.

At the outset, Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's comments in the Response to Arguments section on page 4 of the Office Action for the following reasons.

1. The Examiner asserts that Kodaira teaches the feature of "*said first gap substantially overlaps, in the axial direction, with a screwing region between said retaining part and said fixing nut screwed into said retaining part.*" In particular, as shown in Fig. 2 of Kodaira annotated by the Examiner (left), the Examiner refers to the screwing region between the housing B and element 7 as the first gap of the present invention. The Examiner further asserts "the art is combined to show the benefits of using a first housing, and a second housing and intermediate yoke with respective threaded portions to allow for increased strength." However, setting aside the appropriateness of the alleged first gap in Kodaira and the asserted motivation to combine, even if the connect portion of the first housing 21 and the second housing 22 in Nagamatsu (portion A shown in the blow annotated Fig. 3 of Nagamatsu (right)) were modified by including an intermediate yoke with threaded portions between the first housing 21 and the second housing 22 (portion A), as suggested by the Examiner, assuming arguendo the screwing region (the alleged first gap) would still fail to substantially overlap with a screwing region between the alleged retaining part 54 and the alleged fixing nut 56 screwed into the retaining part in the axial direction.



2. The Examiner asserts that the feature of “*within said first gap, an increase in an outer diameter of the retaining part caused when the fixing nut is tightened is absorbed*” as recited in claim 1 is simply an intended use. However, Applicants respectfully submit that this recitation does result in a structural difference between the claimed invention and the prior art and that the structure of prior art cannot achieve this feature. As mentioned above, the Examiner refers to the screwing region between the housing B and element 7 of Kodaira as the first gap of the present invention. However, it is clear that this screwing region of Kodaira is formed by the yoke 7 with the female threaded portion 36 and the housing B with male threaded portion 37 engaged with each other in order to tighten the connection of the housing A and the housing B. It should be appreciated that the female threaded portion 36 and the male threaded portion 37 of Kodaira must fully engage with each other and thus leave no gap/space to absorb any increase caused by the bearing holder ring 32 (the alleged fixing nut) being screwed into the housing B. Therefore, it is submitted that the structure of Kodaira is not capable of performing the feature of “*within said first gap, an increase in an outer diameter of the retaining part caused when the fixing nut is tightened is absorbed*” as recited in claim 1.

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that Nagamatsu and Kodaira fail to teach or suggest the features of “*said first gap substantially overlaps, in the axial direction, with a screwing region between said retaining part and said fixing nut screwed into said retaining part.*” and “*within said first gap, an increase in an outer diameter of the retaining part caused when the fixing nut is tightened is absorbed*” as recited in claim 1.

On the other hand, without conceding to the propriety of the Examiner’s rejection, but merely to timely advance the prosecution of the application, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the features of “*the retaining part has a first portion whose diameter is smaller than a diameter of a second portion thereof which secures concentricity of the first and second housing, thereby providing a first gap*” and “*the first gap is provided adjacent to the second gap in the axial direction.*” Applicants respectfully submit that the above mentioned features are not disclosed or made obvious by Nagamatsu and Kodaira.

Specifically, as recited in claim 1, the first gap of the present invention is formed by intentionally providing a retaining part with *a first portion whose diameter is smaller than a diameter of a second portion thereof*, which is clearly distinguishable over the seam asserted by the Examiner which naturally exists between two elements coupled together. In particular, the Examiner refers to portion of element 54 where the preloaded nut 56 screwed into in Nagamatsu as the retaining part of the present invention. However, as clearly shown in Fig. 3 of Nagamatsu, the asserted retaining part does **not** have *“a first portion whose diameter is smaller than a diameter of a second portion thereof which secures concentricity of the first and second housing, thereby providing a first gap”* as recited in claim 1. In addition, it is submitted that Kodaira also fails to teach or suggest this feature and thus fails to cure this deficiency of Nagamatsu.

Furthermore, as recited in claim 1, the first gap of the present invention is provided adjacent to the second gap in the axial direction. However, referring to Fig. 2 of Kodaira annotated by the Examiner shown above, the alleged first gap (the screwing region between the first housing A and the second housing B) and the alleged second gap (the portion adjacent to the caulking portion 39 of the first housing A) in Kodaira are **not** continuously provided adjacent to each other in the axial direction. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that Kodaira fails to teach or suggest *“the first gap is provided adjacent to the second gap in the axial direction”* as recited in claim 1. In addition, it is submitted that Nagamatsu also fails to this feature in claim 1 and thus fails to cure this deficiency of Kodaira.

Since Nagamatsu and Kodaira, either taken alone or in combination, fail to teach each and every claimed feature as recited in claim 1, claim 1 clearly defines over the teachings of Nagamatsu and Kodaira.

In addition, claims 2-7 and 9 depend, either directly or indirectly, from independent claim 1, and are therefore allowable based on their respective dependence from independent claim 1, which is believed to be allowable.

In view of the above amendments to the claims and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-7 and 9 clearly define the present invention over the references relied on by

the Examiner. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103 are respectfully requested.

Conclusion

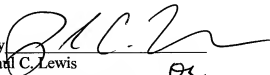
All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Paul C. Lewis, Registration No. 43368, at the telephone number of the undersigned below to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Director is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge any fees required during the pendency of the above-identified application or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448.

Dated: **May 25, 2011**

Respectfully submitted,

By 
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